DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 443 767 SO 031 900

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TITLE Institutionalizing International Influence: The Context for Education Reform in Africa.
PUB DATE 1998-07-01
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Conference on International Trends in Teacher Education (Durban, South Africa, July 20-22, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education; Developing Nations; *Educational Change; Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Educational Research; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Africa; Commonality; *International Trends; South Africa

ABSTRACT

Perhaps because educational achievement often has been associated with elite status, the organization and focus of education nearly everywhere in the modern era reflects international influences, some more forceful than others. In this era, with few exceptions, the direction of influence is from European core to southern periphery. Institutional arrangements, disciplinary definitions and hierarchies, legitimizing publications, and instructional authority reside in that core, which periodically incorporates students and professors from the periphery, many of whom may never return home. Noting that education convergence in the current era has been marked by both imaginative innovations and the even more striking commonalities across diverse settings, this paper considers the general theme of international influence in education reform and explores the context for education reform in Africa, particularly South Africa. The paper discusses 20th-century education reform and the commonalities across national settings that have most intrigued scholars of comparative education. It describes the context for education reform, and socialist disarray and United States triumphalism, along with the resuscitation of modernization theory. The paper also considers the changing roles in the United Nations system, aid dependence, international education currents, education as investment, education as production, and education as delivery system. It discusses different aspects of education in contemporary Africa, the role(s) of research, and South African "uniqueness." The paper concludes by outlining the challenges for those involved in reforming education in South Africa, in particular teacher education. Contains 49 notes and 86 references. (BT)

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ED 443 767

INSTITUTIONALIZING INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE:

THE CONTEXT FOR EDUCATION REFORM IN AFRICA

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SO 031 900

Prepared for presentation at the Conference on International Trends in Teacher Education
Faculty of Education, University of Durban-Westville, Durban, South Africa, 20–22 July 1998

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1 July 1998

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Institutionalizing International Influence: The Context for Education Reform in Africa[1]

Joel Samoff

Global Convergence

Throughout human history societies have borrowed from and imposed their wills on each other. Perhaps because educational achievement has often been associated with elite status, the organization and focus of education nearly everywhere in the modern era reflects international influences, some more forceful than others.

Colonial rule provided the setting for a particular sort of international influence in education: the implantation of metropolitan education institutions in the colonized world. Emulations, models, replicas, or overseas branches, these institutions often reproduced not only the curriculum, pedagogy, and hierarchial organization of their European models but even their architecture and staff and student codes of conduct. Both the intentions of the colonizers and the aspirations of the colonized elite they socialized insisted that the new education institutions appear to resemble as closely as possible their models. Still, they remained distinctly colonial institutions. Their charge was equip a segment of the colonized society with the skills needed to administer the colonial enterprise. In practice, they were fully integrated into neither the local society nor the metropolitan education system. Even the special schools that served expatriates and an emerging national elite were generally truncated copies of their metropolitan counterparts.

We see here international influence as imposition, emulation, and borrowing, with both coercion and rewards. In the modern era, with few exceptions, the direction of influence is from European core to southern periphery. Institutional arrangements, disciplinary definitions and hierarchies, legitimizing publications, and instructional authority reside in that core, which periodically incorporates students and professors from the periphery, of whom many never return home. There are, to be sure, challenges to this dominance. The end of the 20th Century finds Japan a strong claimant to core status, with a widely respected education system. Several rapidly industrializing countries have invested heavily in education, including the development of recognized centers of research and innovation. Occasionally, an academic debate initiated in the periphery—for example, dependency in Latin American, oral history in Tanzania—becomes a critical concern for core institutions, perhaps supporting the view that the weakest links of the global system are those at the periphery. Intellectual challenges rooted in the core regularly include advocates from outside the core.[2]

To proceed toward our general theme, let us note that the education convergence in the current era has been marked by both imaginative innovations and the even more striking commonalities across diverse settings.

Twentieth Century Education Reform

The Twentieth Century has been a period of education reform initiatives with roots in several different national settings. Early in the century U.S. education reformers sought to link schools more closely with their communities and to reinforce the organic connections among

1. I draw here on "Institutionalizing International Influence," a chapter prepared for a forthcoming book on international and comparative education edited by Robert F. Arnove and Carlos A. Torres.

2. As for example the composition of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences, chaired by Immanuel Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

learning, schooling, and work. The Bolshevik Revolution provided an opening for examining critically the role of education, though in practice Soviet educators drew heavily on the thinking of the U.S. education reformers as they emphasized technical education and sought to link schooling even more closely to employment needs and opportunities.[3]

The decolonization era following World War II saw experiment and ferment in education. For the newly decolonized countries of Africa and southern Asia, the transfer of sovereignty offered the hope and possibility of charting new directions. For parts of Latin America and China, regime transitions provided space for education innovators. The competition of capitalism and socialism, especially the efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union to extend their influence in the southern hemisphere, created maneuvering room for experimentation. At the same time, the widespread student and worker militancy of May 1968 highlighted a parallel upheaval in the North Atlantic. Students asserted their political role, condemning their education and the societies whose expectations and values it transmitted. While the national mobilizations generally fell short of their political objectives, education itself became both the focus of intense reform efforts and the vehicle for broader challenges to the political order. This trajectory is especially clear in South Africa, where in the mid 1970s students protesting an education issue—the government's decision to require instruction in Afrikaans—quickly escalated their challenge to focus on disadvantaged education and the entire structure of white rule.

Commonalities

Still, it is the commonalities across national settings that have most intrigued scholars of comparative education. Let us consider briefly just one example. Especially striking has been the relatively rapid movement in most countries from education as the privilege of a small elite to mass education as a responsibility of the state. Often, analysts have sought explanations for that transition within particular societies. In specific settings scholars have attributed the national decision to develop mass education to the importance of schools as mechanisms of social control, to the role of education as a desired good able to win public support in the conflict among competing interest groups and political coalitions, to schooling as a common experience essential to developing social solidarity and national identity, to the perceived need to prepare the labor force for industrial society, and to the belief that education promotes national development. Other scholars have sought to elucidate the theories of the state embedded in national philosophies of education[4] and to understand education in terms of the national and global political economy.[5] Refining their earlier argument about the correspondence between state and school, Bowles and Gintis argue that education necessarily reflects, and simultaneously is in tension with, the structure of the national political economy.[6]

Challenging that national orientation, Boli and Ramirez interpret the rapid implementation of compulsory schooling in diverse societies as the global consequence of a distinctly western set of values and cultural practices.[7] The Nineteenth Century saw, in their view, revised

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3. Martin Carnoy, "Education and the Transition State," in Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff, *Education and Social Transition in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 91ff and n. 12.

4. Martin Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), and Martin Carnoy, "Education and the State: From Adam Smith to Perestroika," in *Emergent Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives*, Robert F. Arnove, Philip G. Altbach, and Gail P. Kelly, editors (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 143-159.

5. For example, Samuel Bowles, and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

6. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, "Education as a Site of Contradictions in the Reproduction of the Capital-Labor Relationship: Second Thoughts on the 'Correspondence Principle,'" *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 2(1981):223-242.

7. John Boli, Francisco O. Ramirez, and John W. Meyer, "Explaining the Origins and Expansion of Mass Education," *Comparative Education Review* 29 (1985):145-170; Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli, "The Political Construction of

understandings of the individual, the state, and social organization, which in turn required the transition from elite to mass education. Drawing on notions of modernization[8] and world system,[9] they argue that the widespread adoption of mass education reflected a global diffusion of western cultural values, including a focus on an improved material standard of living, a sense of the individual as the fundamental social unit and the ultimate source of value and authority, and an expanded state responsible for social welfare.

Other authors focused on the agency of that diffusion in the post-colonial era. Arnove and Berman explored the critical roles of national commissions of inquiry and philanthropic foundations in specifying the organization of the social sciences, that is, the acceptable procedures for studying society.[10] Westernization did not mark inexorable and inevitable progress toward a universal modernity but rather reflected a conscious process of creating and shaping institutions. Born in the changing organization of production and accompanied by the expansion of monotheistic religions and the creation of the nation-state, the development of capitalist hegemony was not a conscious design in the manner of the construction of pre-capitalist empires. Rather, it occurred through the actions of particular individuals and institutions. Education was both cause and consequence.

Even in remote corners of the world, teaching—in practice surely a very local enterprise—also reflects international influences. My concern here is to explore the broader context for efforts to reform teacher education and education more generally in South Africa. To develop that exploration, I shall address briefly several major elements of that context: recent changes in the global political economy, the increasing aid dependence of education in Africa, international and African education currents, and the roles of research and researchers in this arena. Then, I shall suggest that the uniqueness of the South African situation must not become an excuse for ignoring or discounting relevant experiences elsewhere and conclude by outlining several challenges for education reformers in Africa at the century's end. Throughout, guided by the notion that deeper structural relationships and pressures operate through and are thus visible in specific institutional arrangements, my principal focus will be on the ways in which the external environment is internalized, the *institutionalization of international influence*.

The Context for Education Reform

By the late Twentieth Century *development* and *aid* had become inextricably linked. Modernization provided the theoretical underpinnings, interpreting human progress as more or less linear progression always characterized by a fundamental distinction between the more and

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Mass Schooling: European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalization," *Sociology of Education* 60 (1987): 2-17; Francisco O. Ramirez and Richard Rubinson, "Creating Members: The National Incorporation of Education," in *National Development and the World System: Educational, Economic, and Political Change, 1950-1970*, John W. Meyer and Michael T. Hanan, editors (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); John Boli and Francisco O. Ramirez, "Compulsory Schooling in the Western Cultural Context," in *Emergent Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives*, Robert F. Arnove, Philip G. Altbach, and Gail P. Kelly, eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 25-38.

8. For example, Alex Inkeles and David Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

9. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System; Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of The European World-economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980); *The Modern World System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730-1840s* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989).

10. Robert F. Arnove and Edward H. Berman, "Neocolonial Policies of North American Philanthropic Foundations" (Paris: Fifth World Congress of Comparative Education, 2-6 July 1984); Robert F. Arnove, "The Ford Foundation and the Transfer of Knowledge: Convergence and Divergence in the World System," *Compare* 13,1(1983):17-18; Robert F. Arnove, editor, *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980); Edward H. Berman, *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

the less modern.[11] Colonial rule crystallized the we/they, modern/primitive categorization and reached to notions of social obligation (colloquially, the "white man's burden") to justify the often harsh imposition of European rule and rules. Following World War II, the new United Nations system incorporated the idea of trusteeship even as it became an arena for challenging and terminating colonial rule. At the same time, the link between development and aid was formally institutionalized in the creation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Charged with supporting rebuilding Europe and generally in alliance with the International Monetary Fund, another institution responsible for facilitating orderly international exchange, the World Bank dispensed both funds and advice.

Education was no exception. If education was associated with economic progress, then surely it had to be a prominent component of development aid. As a large number of former colonies became independent, many of them very poor and with little investment or infrastructure to support autonomous development, it became commonplace that improving education required foreign assistance. After an initial period of high expectations and apparently rapid progress, education in poorer countries became a story, not of development and independence, but of decay, crisis, and dependence. Indeed, as the century ends, there is a cry for the return of colonial rule—"some states are not yet fit to govern themselves"—a proposal that might be regarded as outrageous but in fact seems sufficiently legitimate to feature in prominent publications.[12]

Socialist Disarray and U.S. Triumphalism

Not so long ago, Alternative Strategies of Development featured prominently in university course catalogues and internationalist bookshops. No longer. That notion of alternative approaches and the scholars who employ it have become anachronisms, heirlooms that may be interesting but are no longer of any great utility.

The precipitous dissolution of communist rule is interpreted as the inevitable victory of the U.S. over the U.S.S.R., capitalism over socialism, the market over planning, indeed good over evil. Capitalism prevailed because it is inherently better. What better proof could there be than its unequivocal victory. Even more. Everything that can be linked to socialism, however tenuous the link, is clearly flawed, precisely because of that link.

The arrogance of U.S. triumphalism is palpable and unceasing:

> We're the only country complicated enough, sophisticated enough, big enough to lead the human race.[13]

There is a grand—and instructive—irony in a triumphalism that is politically and ideologically centered in the United States. As Przeworski puts it

> Neoliberal ideology, emanating from the United States and various multinational agencies, claims that the choice is obvious: there is only one path to development, and it must be followed. . . . . Yet if a Martian were asked to pick the most efficient and humane economic systems on earth, it would certainly not choose the countries that rely most on markets. The United States is a stagnant economy in which real wages have been constant for more than a decade and the real income of the poorer 40 percent of the population has declined. It is an inhumane society in which 11.5 percent of the population—some 28

11. Talcott Parson's pattern variables provided a scientific legitimacy for that differentiation (*Structure and Process in Modern Societies*. (New York: Free Press, 1963)). Valentin Y. Mudimbe explores how those who saw themselves as modern required an "other" to define themselves, inventing it as necessary: *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

12. "Some states are not yet fit to govern themselves." Paul Johnson, "Colonialism's Back—and Not a Moment Too Soon," *New York Times Magazine* (13 April 1993):23.

13. Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, 7 June 1995, quoted in the *New York Times*, 8 June 1995.

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> million people, including 20 percent of the children—lives in poverty. It is the oldest democracy on earth, but has one of the lowest voter-participation rates in the democratic world, and the highest per capita prison population in the world.[14]

Where socialism can provide neither useful ideas nor instructive experiences and where only one strategy of development is worth considering, the lessons are clear. Third World poverty is a Third World phenomenon. Where poverty is the result of poor policies, policy reform—structural adjustment—is the essential remedy. The prescription follows from the diagnosis: "getting macroeconomic policies right" (especially reducing budget deficits, increasing tax revenues, eliminating barriers to international exchange); "taxing agriculture less"; "putting exporters first"; "rationalizing import barriers"; "privatizing public enterprises"; and "financial reform" (especially "reducing financial repression, restoring bank solvency, and improving financial infrastructure").[15]

This triumphalism has (at least) two powerful consequences for the relationship between aid and policy making. Those who have triumphed need no longer listen. Since they *know* what is right, and since it is their power, rather than negotiation, that secures their interests, they can instruct rather than learn. As well, since the triumph, they believe, proves the correctness of their perspective, they need not feel reticent or guilty about telling others what to do.

Like its 1960s incarnation, late 20th century developmentalism takes the global political economy as given, rather like a complex weather pattern. Africans cannot change the intertropical convergence zone that dominates much of the continent's weather. Monsoon rains and droughts are simply beyond their control. So the world system. Imposing, inexorable, and largely out of reach. That understanding itself fosters impotence. Consciously and forcefully, late 20th century developmentalism directs attention away from efforts to conceive of the world system as a web of nation-states and corporations, linked in complex but understandable and modifiable ways. Countries and companies, after all, are organized and managed by people and can be changed by people, sometimes even the lowest level laborers and poorest citizens. At issue here, then, is not a contest between external/foreign and internal/national explanations for the Third World's problems. Rather, it is the internalization within the Third World of the relationships and understandings of that larger environment, the internationalization even of ways of knowing, that has largely been excluded from the analytic and policy agendas.

Resuscitation of Modernization

This late 20th Century developmentalism also reflects the resuscitation of modernization theory, which insists now, as it did a half century ago, that the causes of the Third World's problems are to be found within the Third World: its people, resources, capital, skills, psychological orientation, child-rearing practices, and more. That analytic framework is seductive and often assumed uncritically. Just as poverty is to be explained by the characteristics and (in)abilities of the poor, so the explanations of problems of Third World education are to be found within and around Third World schools. Institutionalized in the centers of financial, industrial, and academic authority, this fundamental misunderstanding is sheltered from the challenge that the primary sources of contemporary problems are to be found in the process by which most Third World countries have been incorporated into the global economy. The international relationships are acknowledged and at the same time treated as part of the policy environment. They are the furniture, the paint on the walls, the air in the room—a part of the setting and thereby not a principal concern for policy attention. As normal and largely unexceptional fea-

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14. Adam Przeworski, "The Neoliberal Fallacy," *Journal of Democracy* 3,3 (July 1992): 45-59.

15. World Bank, *Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results, and the Road Ahead—Summary* (Washington: World Bank, 1994), 10-13, drawing on the full report, World Bank, *Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results, and the Road Ahead* (Washington: World Bank, 1994), 184-196.

tures of the structure of international interactions, those relationships are assigned a low priority in the search for explanations and strategies for change. In this way what may matter most warrants little explicit attention. The explanatory framework and research agenda that dominate the aid relationship largely exclude from active consideration the analytic perspective that emphasizes global integration. The powerful critique developed by the dependency and world-systems literature—that explaining poverty in the contemporary Third World requires attention to particular countries' roles in a world system and the institutionalization of those global connections within those countries—is widely noted and except in its broadest sweep and most superficial form, commonly ignored. The international order is a given, a background condition. To take as given what are potentially primary causes is to exclude them from the policy (and research) discourse. What is unseen and undiscussed will surely not be the focus of policy attention or public action.

Changing Roles in the United Nations System

Dramatic but little discussed in the analytic literature has been the reorientation of roles and responsibilities among the organizations of the United Nations system. In its 1980 *Education Sector Policy Paper* the World Bank highlighted UNESCO's role as the international education technical assistance agency, crediting it for what has become the World Bank's holy grail, the focus on primary education.[16] By 1995, the World Bank's most recent major education sector overview barely mentions UNESCO and certainly does not indicate that it or anyone else will rely on UNESCO for technical assistance and expertise in education, science, and culture, a reflection of changed roles in the international system.[17]

In the post World War II mood of reconstruction, education was understood as the principal vehicle for remaking the world. Capitalists and socialists agreed. Education had to be central to rebuilding and social transformation, whether in the countries shattered by war, or in those recently decolonized, or where socialism was to become the ideal to be achieved and the engine of development. In many minds, there really was no alternative, or rather, education was an essential antidote to the horrors of the experiences of the recent past, the Holocaust, trench warfare, and nuclear devastation. In hindsight, the optimism was nearly unbounded.

In that understanding, countries were policy making domains and educators were to be the critical education policy makers. The newly fashioned international system had a distinctly developmental thrust. International economic organizations were to stabilize currency flows (and thus both international trade and national growth) and to support the reconstruction and development of Europe. Special United Nations Councils were charged with economic and social development and with overseeing what were increasingly clearly the final days of the colonial system. For education, science, and culture, UNESCO was to provide technical expertise and assistance. As well, UNESCO was structured to be responsive to its member states, less constrained by the major power vetoes of the Security Council and the rich country dominance of the financial organizations.

Whereas thirty years ago it was powerful nations that sought to impose the will of the international system on former colonies, by the 1990s the international financial institutions had become the principal enforcers of global dictates. Surprisingly rapidly, *structural adjustment* became both the description and the content of the imposition of that external control. Effectively, structural adjustment offered access to capital in exchange for the adoption of externally specified national policies and the surrender of some national autonomy. While the specific mix of policies termed structural adjustment varied from one setting to another, the general strategy was

16. World Bank, *Education: Sector Policy Paper* (World Bank, Washington, 1980), 79.

17. World Bank, *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A World Bank Review* (Washington: World Bank, 1995), a document to which I shall return shortly.

similar across diverse countries. Special foreign aid, not linked to specific projects, and increased foreign assistance in general, became available, on the condition that the recipient government adopt a series of economic policies (often termed "liberalization"). Commonly, those policies emphasized substantial devaluation, decreased direct government role in the economy, especially in productive activities, reduction in the size of the civil service, encouragement of foreign investment, and support for privatization of many activities, including public services. Nearly everywhere the implementation of these policies meant new or increased fees for social services (for example, for medical treatment) and increased prices for consumer goods (often through the elimination of subsidies for staples). For impoverished countries and dysfunctional economies, structural adjustment was stick as well as carrot.

Although their rhetoric seemed to call for a sharply curtailed role for the state in all spheres, structural adjustment programs in fact required a state sufficiently strong to implement highly unpopular measures, especially austerity and reduced price supports for basic food and other staples. Conditionalities—providing debt relief, currency support, and aid only when explicit conditions were met—meant that their own governments assumed major responsibility for the dependent integration of poor countries into the global political economy. "Effective governance" became the preferred terminology, with emphasis on administration, management, and appropriate technology. Wearing the cloak of science and resting on the staff of research, this orientation dismissed alternative perspectives as political and non-scientific, especially those that emphasized raised consciousness of inequality and exploitation, mass mobilization, and citizen participation.

It was in that context that the international financial institutions increasingly characterized themselves as development advisory services. To some extent, funds provided earlier to the more affluent countries of the North had always been accompanied by advice. By the 1990s, however, they were increasingly seeking to play that role for the poor countries of South. In the process, the funding organizations, especially but not only the World Bank, effectively eclipsed the technical assistance institutions like UNESCO. Reviewing the evolution of UNESCO is beyond the scope of this discussion. It is important to note, however, that the UN organization institutionally most directly responsive to the majority of its members (no major power veto, no votes weighted by affluence) has come to be regarded by much of the world as less able to provide effective education advisory services than the World Bank.

The institutionalization of this relationship, and particularly of the World Bank's role, takes several forms. in part because there is a fundamental tension between international control and national implementation. Having analyzed the problems and prescribed the solutions, the international agencies commonly assume they must direct events. At the same time, education reform is the responsibility of national authorities. Where they perceive the agenda to be imposed and perhaps inimical to their interests, national leaders are unlikely to pursue energetically the prescribed reforms. For the international agencies, the challenge in this setting is to find strategies for exercising influence while encouraging national commitment to and implementation of the recommended reform strategy.

A major international conference, little known outside the circle of those most directly involved in Third World education but likely to be a point of reference, and perhaps legitimacy, for many years to come, was one response to that challenge. With appropriate substance and ceremony a distinguished group of educators and political leaders met in Jomtien, Thailand, in March, 1990, to declare their support for making education available to everyone on the planet. Initiated and guided by the World Bank, the World Conference on Education for All had several formal sponsors: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank. Amidst formal ceremonies, official statements, and research reports, some 1,500 participants from 155 governments, 20 inter-governmental bodies, and 150

non-governmental organizations adopted by acclamation a World Declaration on Education for All and a Framework for Action. Other resolutions adopted by acclamation reflected the conference title. All people must have access to basic education, both because [basic] education should now be considered a right of citizenship and because development, however conceived, requires an educated populace. A series of follow-up conferences and monitoring agencies are intended to support continued progress toward universal access to basic education. It is far from clear, however, that this conference has in fact changed much behavior. Countries already committed to basic education have continued to support it. Others have neither increased their allocations to education or transferred funding within education from other levels to basic education. Similarly, those funding agencies that already had major basic education support programs have continued them. The programs of others reflect different priorities. There is little evidence of the massive increase in global aid estimated to be necessary to achieve education for all.[18]

Here, then, is a major initiative to institutionalize international influence. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of collaboration and partnership, the agenda was largely that of the World Bank and other agencies. They sought to use this mechanism to persuade reluctant governments to reorder their priorities toward basic education. In a few settings, the conference and surrounding activities provided additional maneuvering room and perhaps leverage to education advocates. Elsewhere, beyond a tacit acquiescence in the World Bank's authoritative leadership, little changed. Indeed, some countries charged that the preference for basic education was intended to undermine support for higher education and thereby confine poor countries in their poverty. Without the development of advanced skills and research capacity, poor countries are relegated to the intellectual periphery, perpetually dependent on ideas and technologies—and more important, ways of understanding—developed elsewhere. Impoverishing universities, the principal institutions for educating teachers and teacher educators, eventually undermines even the commitment to basic education.

At about the same time, the World Bank sought to institutionalize its leadership position among the funding and technical assistance agencies with support programs in Africa. Providing its initial funding, guiding philosophy, secretariat, and chair, the World Bank supported the creation of Donors to African Education (DAE). Committed to promoting cooperation and coordination among the agencies and between the agencies and African education ministries, DAE became the umbrella for a series of Working Groups, each focused on a particular education level or problem and each led by one of the funding and technical assistance agencies. Several of the other aid agencies with major Africa support programs did agree for a time to follow the World Bank's lead, though others dragged their feet. To assure both impact and legitimacy, this initiative also required committed African participation in the form of explicit collaboration with African education ministers. Over time, that may transform the organization. By the mid-1990s, its leadership and secretariat had moved out of the World Bank and the African education ministers had begun to play a more energetic and influential role. A name change, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), reflected the efforts to redefine coordination and partnership.

Two observations are appropriate here. First, these two initiatives employed the language of collaboration and joint effort as they created an institutional apparatus for the international organizations', and especially the World Bank's, leading role. In practice, both did reinforce particular understandings about education and development—for example, that spending on basic education is a very sound and very high priority investment in national development—and thus institutionalized influence by making it unexceptional. Conventional wisdom on analyzing and understanding education came to reflect the perspectives of economists and bankers. That

18. Christopher Colclough with Keith Lewin, *Educating All the Children: Strategies for Primary Schooling in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

education ought to be considered an investment and that education funding should be analyzed with the tools used to assess investments in other settings become commonplace, framework assumptions that were hardly noticed. As such, what otherwise might seem to be controversial issues that warrant extended discussion escape critical attention. Major assumptions that if highlighted might be sharply contested are embedded in the ostensibly uncontroversial tools. The active debates focus on which investment yields a higher return rather than on the utility of the investment metaphor as an analytic construct for understanding education.

Second, both initiatives reflect the nature of education as contested terrain. Influence is not unchallenged control. In some circumstances, institutions created for one purpose can be redirected toward another. While the patterns of power and dominance are clear, it would be incorrect to presume that influence moves in only one direction or to ignore the ways in which the ostensible victims of the global system in fact assert initiatives and influence courses of action.

Aid Dependence

How, then, do external events and forces influence what happens within particular countries? Pulled by popular demand and pushed by the need for highly educated and skilled personnel, education can quickly become an insatiable demand for resources. Especially as economic crises succeeded earlier developmental optimism and structural adjustment replaced rapid development as the realistic short term objective in Third World countries, there was strong pressure to assign the highest priority for available funds to directly productive activities, which often did not include education. How then to educate the teachers, or develop new textbooks, or equip the science laboratories? Or more commonly, how to fix the leaking roof? The common recourse was to external funding. For many though of course not all Third World countries the external provision of assistance funds has become the center of gravity for education and development initiatives. Over time, it has come to seem not only obvious but unexceptional that new initiatives and reform programs require external support, and therefore responsiveness to the agenda and preferences of the funding agencies.

It is important to note that while foreign aid to Third World education is substantial, its influence often far exceeds its volume. Since its first education loan in 1963, World Bank education funding has increased significantly, tripling in volume between 1980 and 1995 and doubling its share in total World Bank lending. By 1990 the World Bank's allocation of nearly US$ 1.5 billion made it the largest single source of external financing for education in developing countries.[19] That large share, however, amounted to less than 0.5 percent of total spending on education in developing countries. Accordingly, the World Bank insists that its "main contribution must be advice, designed to help governments develop education policies suitable for the circumstances of their countries. Bank financing will generally be designed to leverage spending and policy change . . . ."[20]

Economic crisis and structural adjustment affect both resources and how they are used. Commonly, the response to both has focused primarily on reducing government expenditures. Sometimes, the press of circumstances makes it possible to overcome entrenched resistance to cutting spending and reallocating resources in ways that contribute to the general health of the economy and the well-being of the populace. Often, however, the focus on spending less, ostensibly to use resources more efficiently, effectively, and equitably, becomes an end in itself. When it does so, the campaign to cut often obscures important objectives and rearranges priorities.

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19. *Priorities and Strategies in Education*, 14 and 146, Table 12.1. Note that in this report, the World Bank has expanded its definition of "developing countries" to include the countries of (eastern) Europe "in transition from command to market economies" as well as those the World Bank usually terms "Less Developed Countries."

20. *Priorities and Strategies in Education*, 14-15.

Most studies of the impacts of crisis and adjustment have been concerned primarily with reduced public spending on education. Perhaps even more important, however, are rather less visible but more enduring influences on both the national education agenda and how it is set.

As the reliance on foreign funds increases, so does the influence of both the finance ministry and the external agencies. Representing the government in negotiations with those agencies, the finance ministry tends to become much more directly involved in policy and programmatic details across all government departments. That increased role may suit well the external agencies. Especially concerned with reducing government spending, those agencies are likely to see the finance ministry as their ally, in contrast with ministries of, say, health or education, whose general mandate requires them to be more concerned with spending than with saving. The alliance between external agency and finance (and perhaps planning) ministry may be structured as a powerful lever for influencing national policy.

Dependence on, rather than simply use of, external funds leads to both explicit conditions imposed by the funding organizations and more subtle influences. Sometimes that relationship is aggressively manipulative. The funding agency may make the provision of support conditional on the adoption of specific policies, priorities, or programs. Support for vocational schools, for example, may be contingent on the implementation of a strategy designed to increase female enrollment in the technical curriculum. Occasionally influence flows in the other direction. To secure resources for a preferred program, the national leadership may mobilize support and bring pressure to bear on the funding agency in its home. Where, for example, the goal is to acquire microcomputers, the national leadership may communicate directly with individuals and organizations in the prospective funding agency's home country who are energetic advocates of the instructional use of microcomputers.

At other times that relationship is less directly influential. The funding agency may, for example, finance research intended to support its preferred programmatic orientation. Or the Third World educators may tailor their requests, more or less explicitly, to fit within the funding agency's agenda. In their planning discussions, for example, they may begin by exploring the funding agency's current high priority goals and then consider how to develop a request for assistance congruent with that priority. Occasionally the paths of influence are far more circuitous. A desire to win support for a high priority goal in one project may promote a willingness to accommodate a low priority goal in another.

Case studies of national responses to economic crisis indicate both the forms of aid dependence and differences among countries. Heavily dependent on foreign assistance, Sénégal and Tanzania have repeatedly modified education and training policies and programs in ways that reflected the priorities and preferences of the funding agencies.[21] By the end of the 1980s, for example, the planning director in Tanzania's education ministry characterized his work as "marketing."[22] His task, he said, was to advertise and market broad ideas and specific projects in the hope of finding a sponsor—an external assistance agency—to fund them. Over time priorities were set less by government and party leaders and more by what foreign governments and their aid organizations were willing to finance. The power brokers in education had once been those who could put together coalitions of people influential in Tanzania's public and private life. By the late 1980s they had become those who were most successful in securing foreign

21. Two of the case studies of the impacts of economic crisis and structural adjustment on education and training, commissioned by a UNESCO-ILO Task Force, reported in Joel Samoff, editor, *Coping With Crisis: Austerity, Adjustment, and Human Resources* (London: Cassell and UNESCO, 1994).

22. Joel Samoff, with Suleman Sumra, "From Planning to Marketing: Making Education and Training Policy in Tanzania," in Joel Samoff, editor, *Coping With Crisis: Austerity, Adjustment, and Human Resources* (London: Cassell, 1994), 134-172

funding, those who seemed to have the most reliable access to embassies in Dar es Salaam and institutional headquarters in London, Washington, Stockholm, Paris, and elsewhere.[23]

Marketing may be a reasonable, and reasonably successful, coping strategy in an adverse setting. It may provide a vehicle for securing additional resources at times of economic distress. It may even permit national elites and their foreign partners to put off yet a bit longer confronting major problems and undertaking serious economic, political, and social transformation. At the same time, when marketing is the prevailing orientation, innovation is limited to whatever the funders will finance.

As countries have become more dependent on external funding to support new projects and even recurrent expenditures, planning has acquired an increasingly external focus. Economic and financial crisis energize the search for additional revenue sources. As manufacturers look for new customers, educators seek benefactors. Providing education assistance has become a big business.

National patterns of course vary. Aid dependence does not always secure compliance with the recommendations and expectations of the international financial institutions. Consider, for example, Costa Rica. Asked why his relatively affluent Third World country had accepted the conditions attached to foreign assistance, the former Costa Rican president insisted he simply had no alternative.[24] "A small country has no choice." Already deeply in debt, economically dependent on export sales to the countries that control most of its external aid, resisting with difficulty entanglement in efforts to overthrow a neighbor government, Costa Rica acquiesced to pressures to adopt structural adjustment policies and maintained that orientation through governments led by different political parties. What else could this small country do, its leaders argued? In practice, however, Costa Rica not only secured massive external assistance, but also managed to maintain a good deal of its own agenda, protecting many of the social services—including education and training—targeted for reduction. A combination of its regional role, its history of stable democratic government and limited civil strife, its economic base and relative affluence, and the broad legitimacy of its national political system enabled Costa Rica to retain a good deal of policy autonomy even as it acceded to externally imposed conditions. Another example of local resistance and ability to retain control over local decisions were the teachers unions and militant student organizations who allied to block the implementation of staff reductions and other austerity measures in Sénégal's structural adjustment program.[25]

International Education Currents

The exceptional assertions of national autonomy should not lead us to underestimate the extent and durability of external influence on education policy and practice in Africa. By the end of the 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Union, US triumphalism, and the reorganization of the system of international organizations provided the setting for the *institutionalization of international influence* on education, in large part in the form of aid conditions, with the World Bank as

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23. I review the successive strategies for formulating education policy in Joel Samoff, "Education Policy Formation in Tanzania: Self-Reliance and Dependence," in David R. Evans, editor, *Education Policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries* (Washington: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1994), 85-126. Additional case studies of education policy making in Africa are reported in Association for the Development of African Education, *Formulating Education Policy: Lessons and Experiences from sub-Saharan Africa* (Paris: Association for the Development of African Education, 1996).

24. Former Costa Rican president Arias, quoted in Martin Carnoy and Carlos A. Torres, "Educational Change and Structural Adjustment: A Case Study of Costa Rica," in Joel Samoff, editor, *Coping With Crisis: Austerity, Adjustment, and Human Resources* (London: Cassell, 1994), 92.

25. Michel Carton and Pape N'Diave Diouf, with Christian Comeliau, "Budget Cuts in Education and Training in Sénégal: An Analysis of Reactions," in Joel Samoff, editor, *Coping With Crisis: Austerity, Adjustment, and Human Resources* (London: Cassell, 1994), 121-133.

the advisory, oversight, and sometimes managing agency. In that process, education comes to be regarded as an investment and as production, with significantly decreased attention to learning as a process and to the other social and political goals generally expected of education systems (equality, equity, national unity, citizenship). Expanded attention to international comparisons based on rather narrowly drawn measures of education results may presage efforts to institutionalize international standards for education, especially as a parallel trend is articulated by the national leadership in one of the most decentralized education systems, the U.S.

Education as Investment

Amidst alternative perspectives on education, those of economics and finance have come to dominate the discourse on education and development. For the World Bank, the starting point is human capital theory: education ought to be regarded as an investment in developing a country's human resources. In its 1995 education policy review the assertion of its superiority is unqualified: "Human capital theory has no genuine rival of equal breadth and rigor."[26] The East Asian[27] experience proves the value of investing in education, the World Bank argues, since it is precisely that investment that differentiates the successes from the failures. Within this framework, the primary mechanism for choosing among alternative patterns of investment is rate of return analysis.

Far from universally accepted, both human capital theory and rate of return analysis are intensely debated. Both other funding agencies and the World Bank's own staff are among the critics:

> Traditional cost-benefit studies of education have tended to indicate the advantages of investment in education at various different levels, based on analyses of the social return which each produces. Recent studies have shown this method to be both fallacious and limiting.[28]

Much of the concern with education as an investment self-consciously ignores the *process* of education. Adopting an economic systems approach, it focuses on inputs and outputs, leaving inside the opaque black box most of what those involved in education do every day. Yet, in education process is itself an output.

Schools select and socialize. For both society and individuals, frequently schooling matters more than learning. While specific circumstances of course vary, the education system everywhere is central to constructing and maintaining a particular sort of social order. Often it is equally central to challenging and transforming it. To ignore the ways in which curriculum entrenches and legitimizes inequality, or examinations reinforce and justify patterns of social stratification, or textbooks privilege some perspectives over others is to render meaningless findings about the number of graduates and their subject specializations. Limiting the specification to the relative values of alternative inputs and outputs permits developing a linear analysis and proposing global solutions. But in practice, education is interactive, replete with discontinuities, and always locally contingent. Even bankers and their economic advisers cannot develop feasible

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26. Quoting Mark Blaug, World Bank, *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A World Bank Review* (Washington: ; World Bank, 1995), 21. The citation attached to this sweeping claim (Mark Blaug, writing in 1976, "The Empirical Status of Human Capital Theory: A Slightly Jaundiced Survey," *Journal of Economic Literature* 14) is misleading, since Blaug's more recent writing, for example, "Where are We Now in the Economics of Education?" *Economics of Education Review* 4,1 (1985), rejects the unqualified accolade and many of the common uses of human capital theory.

27. "East Asia" is a recurring reference in *Priorities and Strategies for Education*, presumably used to refer not to a geographic region but to the countries (and then colony) widely regarded to have experienced rapid economic growth: Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

28. Overseas Development Authority, *Into the Nineties: An Education Policy for British Aid* (London: ODA, February 1990).,7. For the use of rate of return analysis to reach the opposite conclusion—in Kenya, secondary, not primary, education has the higher rate of return—see John B. Knight, and Richard H. Sabot, *Education, Productivity, and Inequality: The East African Natural Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 1990).

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priorities and strategies for education by ignoring societal objectives and the learning process, however disorderly, partially understood, and contested they may be.

A second consequence of treating education primarily as a social investment is a disjunction between the issues deemed most important and the objectives articulated by Third World governments and educators. The mass of studies and recommendations that emanate from the funding agencies reflect little or no attention, for example, to fostering an inquiring and critical orientation among learners, eliminating discrimination and reducing elitism, promoting national unity, preparing young people for the rights and obligations of citizenship, equipping them to work cooperatively and resolve conflicts non-violently, or developing among learners a strong sense of individual and collective competence, self-reliance, and self-confidence. Yet these objectives have featured prominently in statements of Third World leaders and ministers of education over the past three decades. These sorts of objectives are of course more difficult to quantify and measure than, say, building classrooms or increasing the availability of instructional materials. How can we know if a particular instructional program has reduced racial or gender discrimination? How shall we determine whether or not conflict resolution skills have improved or ethnic favoritism has declined. Whatever increased tolerance and mutual respect schooling can foster may be overwhelmed by divisive powerful social forces. It is certainly difficult to be confident about what role education has played in pursuing these broader societal objectives. But if we do not ask, we shall certainly never know. To ignore these objectives entirely is to delete them from the education agenda that the World Bank and other funding and technical assistance agencies explicitly set.

Education as Production

A second metaphor commonly used to explain and reform schooling is education as production, which in turn leads to a dominating focus on efficiency. But what, exactly, is efficiency in education?

In manufacturing, efficiency seems clear. To produce bottles or cars efficiently, for example, requires finding the lowest cost raw materials, reducing waste and breakage, training workers to do their jobs quickly and accurately, installing machinery that is reliable, has low energy cost, and is easy to maintain, and making sure that expenditures on marketing are exceeded by income from increased sales. That is, efficiency in manufacturing has to do with reducing the costs of production.

Though the production metaphor is occasionally useful, education is fundamentally different from manufacturing. In an interactive process, the distinction between inputs and outputs is consciously blurred. Bottles do not contribute to their own manufacture. Students do contribute to their own education. Cars do not suggest improvements in the assembly process or reject the old way of doing things. Learners are active participants in their education, not only suggesting improvements and rejecting received wisdom but taking the initiative to chart new paths.

On the face of it, ever larger classes would increase an education system's efficiency. When the teacher's salary is spread across more and more students, the unit cost goes down. But of course the appropriate unit of education is not the student but learning. What matters most in an education system is not how many students there are per teacher, or even how many teacher hours are allocated to each student who completes a particular level, but rather how much and how well those students have learned.

Beyond those problems, it is far from clear that efficiency, however defined, is or ought to be the primary goal to be maximized. Like those responsible for space travel, educators in poor countries may assign higher priority to redundancy. Suppose they discover that every school, or every subject, has its own duplicating machine. To maximize efficiency they might

create a central duplication facility serving several departments or schools. Concentrated at a single site, duplicating machines and their associated supplies would be easier to manage and maintain. Economies of scale might permit reduced staff and purchase of materials at advantageous prices. But a power failure or at that site, or equipment breakdowns, or the lack of key supplies would mean that no school could get duplicated materials. The less efficient alternative, each school or subject with its own duplicating machine, achieves reliability through redundancy. When one school has a power failure or exhausts its supplies, others may continue to function and to provide services for the schools temporarily unable to do their own duplicating. The point here is straightforward: whether efficiency, or redundancy, or some other goal should have the highest priority cannot be assumed but must be determined. That determination is likely to be situationally specific, especially where setting priorities involves, as it should, people within each setting.

Notwithstanding the problems of using efficiency as an analytic construct in education, much of the current education and development writing is intensely concerned with what are commonly termed the internal and external efficiency of education systems.

"Internal efficiency" is regularly used to refer to student progress through school, teacher-student ratios, use of physical facilities, and measures of achievement, commonly all summed in the unit cost per student, with little explicit attention to the ways in which that language structures understanding, in this case converting a matter of education policy (under what circumstances is repetition pedagogically, socially, politically, even economically desirable) into a technical or administrative concern. "External efficiency" is regularly used to refer to the relationship between schooling and the labor market, commonly assessed in terms of the percentage of students who pass, graduate, and secure employment, with little explicit attention to what can or cannot be said confidently about whether or not reforms within formal schooling can or do affect post-school employment. Like cost-benefit analysis, notions of efficiency focus on achieving particular goals with the smallest expenditure. Schools whose spending per pupil (or, per student who completes the education cycle) is low are considered to be internally more efficient that schools whose per pupil expenditures are higher. In this example, internal efficiency may be improved by either spending less per pupil or reducing dropouts and repetition, or both. Increased employment rates among graduates are the principal indicators of greater external efficiency.

Commonly, in their concern with repetition and attrition, studies of internal efficiency consider what they term supply side (quality of instruction) and demand side (parental need for children's labor) factors. Rarely, however, does the analysis proceed to consider the ways in which the education system pushes students out. There is little attention to the magnitude and consequences of various eviction rules, for example the common requirement that pregnant school girls be expelled. Generally this orientation ignores the design of the education system itself, which in most countries is explicitly structured to screen and filter students out of the system. Most education systems are designed to restrict progress to an ever smaller elite. That the pyramid is smaller at the top than at the bottom is not an aberration or mistake or problem to be overcome but an intentional objective. The clearest examples are those systems where the paucity of places at the next level means that in addition to a traumatic selection point (where even many of those who have scored well on the selection examination are precluded from preceding), there are recurring discouraging moments. Students who do not excel in the terms the system sets, formally and informally, are likely to receive periodic negative messages. While the apparent proximate cause for attrition may have to do with test results or family circumstances[29] or distance to school, the underlying context is one of discouragement. "Why continue

29. Note that deficit theory (the underdevelopment of a child's intellectual ability and poor school results are attributed to deficiencies in the home and community environment) gains a renewed lease on life here.

the drain on my family, or deal with the inconvenience, or feel like a failure if I am never going to succeed?" By ignoring the systemic sources of attrition, this approach makes it difficult to conceive of, let alone discuss coherently, the sorts of policies required to transform an exclusive education system into an inclusive system whose guiding principle is genuinely education for all.

In three important ways the constructs *internal efficiency* and *external efficiency* focus policy attention in the wrong direction. Concern with reducing the unit cost per student is likely to be far less fruitful than focusing on increasing the effectiveness of each unit of expenditure. As the World Bank itself regularly points out, many African countries currently allocate far less of their national budget and spend far less of their gross domestic product on education than do countries in much of the rest of the world. Second, since pass and graduation rates are largely the consequences of general education and national policy and therefore not of either student or school achievement, it seems particularly obfuscating to characterize as internal inefficiency the decision to promote few students.

Third, recognizing that the charter of schooling is far broader than, and may not even include, vocational preparation, requires discarding efforts to assess education's external efficiency from rates and types of employment. And since it is far from clear that in-school and skill-specific vocational training make better employees, unemployment rates cannot provide even a rough measure of a more limited notion of employment-preparation efficiency. Note that while efficiency might be assessed in terms of learning rather than expenditures, that is rarely done. When the pressure to quantify confronts the problems in measuring learning, it is learning that is ignored.

Put simply, if the primary goals of schooling are to develop literacy, numeracy, and social consciousness and to foster curiosity, creativity, and critique, if educators know relatively little about the sort of early in-school training that leads to better mechanics, or managers, or teachers, and if it is likely that adults will work in several different occupations, then the rate-of-employment yardstick is a problematic and probably inappropriate tool for evaluating schooling.

From this perspective, to focus on internal and external efficiency as commonly defined is to undermine education's efforts to achieve the broader goals with which it has been charged. It is also important to note here that to use this terminology—internal and external efficiency—is to cast as problems of administration and management, presumably amenable to technical solutions, what are fundamentally issues of public policy.

A corollary to the stress on efficiency is insistence on feasibility and practicality.[30] While at first glance that may seem quite reasonable, in practice that orientation constrains both education and development. Innovations are inherently risky. Attempts to change roles (for example, teachers and students as curriculum developers), quality measures (the mix and weights of student portfolios, continuous assessment, and standardized examinations), pedagogy (learner-centered instruction, mixed ability groups), and links with the world of work (education with production) may fail or interfere with other objectives. Since innovations are risky, funding and technical assistance agencies generally require using older, ostensibly proven and reliable approaches. A major consequence of that orientation, to return to the production metaphor, is that creative departures and the production of new means of production take place in the affluent countries. Those who are poor scramble to catch up as they watch those who are more affluent discard the approaches and technologies they are told to use. In practice, poverty is deemed to preclude fundamental innovation, which in turn is likely to perpetuate the poverty.

30. Even as the aid agencies stress feasibility and practicality, their own studies are regularly criticized for their inattention to context and feasibility. The former functions to limit critique and innovation while the latter permits them to promote a general set of recommendations across diverse settings.

Education as Delivery System

Aid dependence entrenches policy and programmatic change as something done *to* rather than *by* Third World education. In most of the education and development literature, learning is understood as information acquisition. The common construct is what Paulo Freire has termed the banking model of education. Learners are like empty bank accounts. More or less formally, teachers and others with the relevant capital, wisdom, make deposits into those accounts. Successful students save their resources and complete their education with heads full of knowledge on which they can subsequently draw. At least for younger learners, learning is understood largely as a passive process. Teachers *give* or *provide* or *offer*, and students *receive*. Where students play a somewhat more active role, they *acquire* knowledge and skills. But what of the extensive thinking, experimentation, and research on education and learning that regard learning as something substantially larger than information acquisition? What of the notion that what learners do is not simply acquire, but *generate*, *master*, *develop*, and *create* knowledge? Educators who understand learning as an active process, who situate learners at the center of that process, and for whom learning involves the appropriation, manipulation, and integration of information have little voice in the policies and programs developed using the economists' tool kit.

In part, this narrow view of education reflects an approach that limits its purview to what can be reasonably measured. Measuring education quality is of course problematic. The difficulties stem both from divergent understandings of what education is and what it is to accomplish and from problems of measurement. Degrees, certificates, and other earned credentials provide one set of measures. Examinations provide another. Indeed, since examinations play a very prominent role in most education systems, it is common to take examination results as the principal, or sometime sole, measure of education quality. For all their flaws, examinations are a standardized and widely recognized measure. There is no comparable measure of progress toward national unity, or improved conflict resolution skills. That reliance on examination results has several advantages, both theoretical and methodological. It also seems to leave the determination of what matters, that is, what is examined, to national authorities rather than imposing a foreign standard.[31] Still, educators everywhere understand the limitations of national and other standardized examinations as measures of education quality. They also understand that what is not examined is generally excluded from quality assessment. Learning as process, information use rather than acquisition, concept formation, development of analytic skills, and the like are apparently only rarely included in quality measures. Other expectations of the education system, for example developing a common national identity, preparing young people for effective citizenship, nurturing cooperative skills, reducing social inequalities, and resolving conflict, are included in quality measures even less often.

The terminology used is both instructive and formative. Reflecting both a detached perspective and the controlled experiment that is the standard model for social science research, education reforms are regularly termed *interventions*, that is insertions from outside rather than initiatives from within. Whether externally funded, externally guided, and often externally managed or initiated, oriented, and directed by the national education leadership, specific reform projects are rarely directly responsible to the settings—whether teachers, students, or the local community—in which they function. How are Third World educators, or schools, teachers, and learners, to become owners of those reforms when they are the objects of the surgery, not the surgeons? Education is termed a *delivery system*, not an organic process in which learners are the

31. Note, though, the increasingly forceful assertion of the importance of international comparisons. In practice, that becomes another vehicle for imposing and institutionalizing standards generally developed outside the poor countries. Rapidly, the discussions among educators, parents, and policy makers focuses on levels of achievement, and the standards themselves become immune to critical scrutiny.

doers rather than the receivers. How do recipients become owners? In practice, this combination of a vantage point external to education (whether national or foreign) and very limited accountability generally proves fundamentally disempowering.

Education in Contemporary Africa

We have been reviewing the broad context for education reform. These currents are of course visible in Africa as well. Let us look now in that direction. What is the context for education reform?

From Unbounded Optimism to a Pervasive Sense of Crisis

A sense of excitement, hope, and anticipation in African education has been replaced by widespread dismay, disappointment, and discouragement. Earlier, the expectations were unbounded:

> We in Zambia are immensely proud of our University. This pride is not simply that this is our first and only University. It is also because the university of Zambia is our own University in a very real sense. . . . . Humble folk in every corner of our nation—illiterate villages, barefooted school children, prison inmates and even lepers—gave freely and willingly everything they could, often in the form of fish, or maize or chickens. The reason for this extraordinary response was that our people see in the University the hope of a better and fuller life for their children and grand children.[32]

Initial post-colonial progress was clear and dramatic.

> Around the time that most countries of Sub-Saharan Africa gained independence from colonial rule, the region lagged far behind the rest of the world on nearly every indicator of Western-style educational development. Efforts since then have been truly dramatic . . . . The record of this period is a tribute to the determination of African leaders and the sacrifices of African parents in their quest to provide a better standard of living for their children's generation.[33]

Today, the most common refrain is crisis. Education in Africa, at all levels and in all its forms, is in dire straits. With few exceptions, both schools and learning have deteriorated, and the situation is continuing to worsen. Recent detailed studies of the education sector have been especially pointed. A sampler:

> The universities of Africa are in crisis. Enrollments rise as capacities for government support decline. Talented staff are abandoning the campuses, libraries are out-dated, research output is dropping, students are protesting overcrowded and inhospitable conditions, and educational quality is deteriorating. The need for action is urgent.[34]
>
> The quality of primary education is at present unacceptably low. . . . . The physical conditions of most schools are unacceptably poor.[35]
>
> Great shortages of qualified and trained teachers . . . a generally poor and non-stimulating learning environment.[36]

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32. President Kenneth Kaunda, at the Chancellor's Installation Banquet of the University of Zambia, 12 July 1996, quoted in J. F. Ade Ajayi, Lameck K. H. Goma, and G. Ampah Johnson, *The African Experience with Higher Education* (Accra, London, and Athens, OH: Association of African Universities, James Currey, and Ohio University Press, 1996), 28.

33. World Bank, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion* (Washington: World Bank, 1988), 11.

34. Ismail Serageldin, Director, Technical Department, Africa Region, World Bank, in William S. Saint, editor, *Universities in Africa: Strategies for Stabilization and Revitalization* (Washington: World Bank, 1992), vii.

35. *Zambia. Primary Education Sector. Report of a Preliminary Fact Finding Mission* (DANIDA, April 1993), 1.

36. *Zanzibar. Proposed DANIDA Support for Educational Development and School Building Activities* (DANIDA: December 1991), 4.

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> A large number, possibly the vast majority, of primary school buildings and many teacher houses are in a very dilapidated state of repair.[37]
>
> [University of Ghana and University of Cape Coast are] a mere shadow of their earlier glory; drained of teaching staff, lacking in equipment and teaching materials, housed in degenerated infrastructure, surrounded by an air of demoralization and incipient decay. They are, at the same time, besieged with a growing demand for high quality service and public accountability.[38]
>
> The problem of youth unemployment in Africa is more insidious than in other regions in the world.[39]

Not only is there crisis, but national authorities seem to be unable to deal with it effectively.

> Most of the Sahelian countries do not have qualified personnel or adequate facilities for planning, administration and management of basic Education. Where these facilities exist, rational working methods for the release of viable statistics and data on education are inexistent. Up to date, none of the member States is capable of correctly planning and evaluating its basic education programmes. It is therefore necessary to improve the institutional capacity through training Programmes and material support for national facilities.[40]
>
> The crisis in Senegalese higher education reflects the lack of any discernible expenditure strategy in the past decade.[41]
>
> Le système éducatif togolais a été caractérisé dans le passé récent par le manque d'une politique sectorielle cohérente et focalisée. [The Togolese educational system has been characterized in the recent past by the lack of a coherent and focused sectoral policy.][42]

Notwithstanding imaginative responses to crisis and "remarkable resilience," no end is in sight for the decay and disarray.

> In the 1990s and beyond, institutions of higher education in Africa, especially the universities, must contend with several interrelated major problems, whose combined effect threatens to strangulate them. . . . . To say that higher education is in Africa is in crisis does not mean simply that the funds available to run higher education institutions are grossly inadequate, thereby making them subsist on a "starvation diet." More than that, African countries and societies are going through a period of economic uncertainty, political and social upheavals, plus other contortions, and higher education has become a victim of the prevailing state of affairs. The situation is likely to remain so, well into the twenty-first century.[43]

Thus, as the twentieth century closes, the general consensus is that education in Africa is in crisis. Africa has of course also been the site of imaginative experiments, innovations in the content and forms of education, and critical reflections on the role of education in society. Both long before Europeans arrived and to this day, Africa's intellectual contributions have had global influence. Still, the prevailing wisdom highlights crisis. In this mindset, both aid dependence and discouraged and dispirited educators and learners become comprehensible.

We must, of course, ask whether or not this is an accurate picture. How do we know? After all, impressions can be misleading, even those of experienced observers. How then do we know, really know, what is happening in African education? We shall return below to the studies quoted above and many more like them and to the roles of research and researchers more

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37. *Tanzania. Proposed DANIDA Assistance to the Primary Education Sector: The Establishment of a Teacher Support Structure* (DANIDA: August 1991), 6.

38. Esi Sutherland-Addy in World Bank, *Revival and Renewal: Reflections on the Creation of a System of Tertiary Education in Ghana* (World Bank, August 1993), 1.

39. World Bank, *A Global Overview of Youth Employment Programs* (World Bank: June 1993), iii.

40. *Project on Sahel Sub-Regional Programme in Support of Education for All by the Year 2000* (UNESCO and Permanent Inter-State Commission on Drought Control in the Sahel, December 1992), 12.

41. World Bank, *Revitalizing Higher Education in Senegal: The Challenge of Reform* (World Bank: 27 April 1992), i.

42. World Bank, *Note sur le Secteur de l'Éducation République du Togo* (World Bank, 27 June 1991), 1.

43. Ajayi, Goma, and Johnson, *The African Experience with Higher Education*, 145.

broadly. First, however, let us consider several other characteristics of education in contemporary Africa.

Persisting External Control and Influence

Without belaboring the discussion, it is important to recall here a point discussed more fully above. External control and influence on education in Africa did not end with the termination of direct colonial rule. Indeed, in the era of aid dependence, that control and influence have perhaps increased, though their bearers and forms have changed.

The affluent countries of the north Atlantic, both those that formerly had African colonies and those that did not, continue to play a prominent role in African education, both directly and indirectly. They supply resources, teachers, curriculum, instructional materials, local and overseas study opportunities, and a great deal of advice. The World Bank has become an important purveyor of both funds and advice and a principal initiator of efforts to insure that the national aid providers support complementary objectives and similar strategies. Churches and other non-governmental organizations, often with funds from national aid allocations, both support education projects and programs in Africa and open and maintain their own facilities. Several philanthropic foundations, most but not all with headquarters in the Untied States, have also played important roles in education and development. The Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations have all sought explicitly to influence the development of the social sciences in Africa. Among the non-U.S. foundations with education activities in Africa have been the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Aga Khan Foundation.

Increasingly, international academic organizations have sought to influence the development of their disciplines globally. In this way, as the International Political Science Association, for example, functions to propagate the fundamental assumptions and orientations of the U.S. political science mainstream, it plays a role in promoting a global convergence of understandings and ways of knowing. Similarly, a small set of internationally recognized journals in each discipline functions to impose standards and set the terms through which Third World scholars must establish their legitimacy.[44]

Calls in many countries for global education standards have spawned a series of cross-national efforts to measure achievement in several subjects at different levels. While they claim sensitivity to the unique characteristics of specific national and local settings, by design those assessments seek to use and thereby institutionalize internationally particular assumptions about both the content and the process of learning and teaching. While the results of the assessment measures may contribute to improving the quality of education in some settings, their more powerful role is to reject the education philosophy that associates effective learning with education objectives and measures that are debated and decided locally.

And that is the most important point here. Not only are there continuing external influences on African education, but the power of those influences stems from their institutionalization within the everyday understandings and practices of Africa's educators and learners. Conditions attached to aid may well be coercive, but they are generally concrete and visible. Definitions of quality embedded in comparative assessments may be equally consequential, but they are much more difficult to identify and thus challenge. Their hegemony stems from their ordinariness.

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44. Edmundo F. Fuenzalida, "The Reception of 'Scientific Sociology' in Chile," *Latin American Research Review* XVIII, 2 (1983), 95-112.

Marginalizing Teachers in Teacher-Centered Education

On the African terrains swept by the international currents discussed above, what becomes of teachers? For nearly all of the world, education remains very teacher-centered. It is teachers who are charged to transmit knowledge, socialize young people, develop discipline and good manners, and perhaps most important, though the teachers themselves may not fully recognize this role, determine who among the learners will proceed further. In large part because schooling remains so teacher-centered, teachers are blamed for failures, both individual and those of the education system more broadly. As well, the annals of education reform, especially in the Third World, are replete with efforts to reduce the role of teachers or replace them with something else.

Where education is regarded primarily as an investment, the constant effort is to increase the return on that investment. The implications for teachers, whose salaries constitute most and in some countries nearly all of the spending on education, are clear. One strategy for increasing the return on the education investment is to reduce the spending per teacher, thereby permitting a greater yield per unit of investment. The pressure for rapid expansion of access to education in the Third World also becomes pressure to reduce or constrain the spending per teacher. Allocations to pre-service teacher education are reduced, with or without corresponding reductions in the content and length of the course of study. The average skill level of the teaching force is reduced as crash programs send untrained teachers to schools or some teaching functions are reassigned to teacher aides or paraprofessionals with limited preparation or formal teacher education. The alternative strategy for increasing the return on the education investment is to increase the number of students per teacher. Average class sizes may become larger, either through formal action or informal acceptance of increased admissions and repetition. Double sessions and multigrade teaching may also increase the number of students for whom each teacher is responsible.

The pressures are similar where education is understood as a production process. Efficiency involves reducing the costs of production and increasing the output. Even as they are held accountable for production failures, teachers may also increasingly be regarded as production workers. As labor on the education assembly line, teachers find themselves subject to industrial-style controls and discipline. As this occurs, teachers themselves disagree on the most effective response: to organize as workers in effective trade unions or to assert their professional status and demand appropriate conditions of service.

Especially where a large percentage of the teachers lack the required formal education, strategies for improving education as a delivery system often involve efforts to regiment or alternatively by-pass the teachers. The combination of restrictive teachers' guides and curriculum manuals, the lack of instructional materials, and the definitive consequences of national examinations leave teachers very little role in determining what is to be taught or how to teach it. Ill-prepared, ill-equipped, and necessarily oriented toward the expectations of the national examinations board, teachers are discouraged from innovating or exercising their own judgment. In this delivery system, teachers are, after all, the principal deliverers. Except in the most minor ways, they are not expected to be creators, or authors, or inventers, or imaginers, or even learners. Periodically education systems experiment with alternative general approaches (in the current terminology, alternative delivery system models). Although it is certainly possible to conceive of multi-channel education systems in which teachers play a central and constructive role, most often the alternative delivery systems are intended to reduce the role of at least some of the teachers. Televised courses, for example, offer the prospect of permitting the most skilled teachers to reach many more students, with a correspondingly diminished role for other, less well trained or less experienced teachers. Earlier, advocates of teaching machines and programmed learning argued that students could interact directly with the material to be learned, rendering

teachers unnecessary or relegating them to a largely administrative and managerial role. Currently, internet missionaries make similar claims.

The point here is not that these and other efforts at education reform are in themselves undesirable. Far from it. Surely learning can take place in many settings and in many forms. Experimentation and innovation in education are to be encouraged, not rejected. Nor am I arguing that it is unreasonable to consider expenditures and costs in making education decisions. Resources are limited, and how they are used does matter. Rather, the point here is that in the midst of efforts to make education systems even more teacher-centered, the teachers themselves are being marginalized. Where one might expect to find teachers' creative role expanded and enhanced, in practice more often we see efforts to restrict and reduce it.

Local Experiments and Innovations: Often Disconnected and Malnourished

Notwithstanding the pervasive sense of crisis, Africa has seen significant experiments and innovations, some strikingly successful. Several countries have mounted effective literacy campaigns, with broad participation and clear evidence of substantial progress. Zimbabwe's educators developed a creative approach to science instruction for teachers with limited formal training and in schools with little or no equipment. Education with production, effectively productive educational communities that seek to integrate learning and work to achieve a multi-faceted self reliance, emerged in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Self reliant schools of another sort, functioning in rough liberated areas with great enthusiasm and no facilities, were opened by the liberation movements in Mozambique and Eritrea. Namibia's prospective teachers develop action research projects. Tanzania created Folk Development Colleges, designed as multi-purpose community education institutions. Satellite schools to reduce the distance from home, village awareness campaigns, development of gender sensitive instructional materials, and other strategies to increase girls' enrollment and school success have been implemented with discernible positive results in several countries. African universities and research centers have been the sites for promising research on commercial fishing, on habitat preservation, on developing pest and drought resistant seed strains, and on mother tongue instruction, among other topics.

With very few exceptions, these experiments and innovations have experienced a period of enthusiastic development and then withered or lost their unique mission and characteristics. For each, there is a local explanation for that trajectory. Resources dried up. Priorities changed. The original founders, whose vision and energy proved to be indispensable, died, retired, or moved on to other things. Aspirations exceeded capacities and the momentum could not be sustained. Schools or learning communities created in one setting did not survive the transition to a new environment. Essential political support evaporated as new leaders took office at regional or national level. Foreign funding, support, and effective protection were terminated. Not infrequently, what was very successful at small scale proved unworkable or unsustainable when expanded to a much larger scale.

Those local explanations, however, are not complete. Few of these experiments received the sustained political and financial support of the national education system. Only very rarely have similar initiatives in different places become sufficiently linked to receive sustenance from each other. Indeed, most often the initiators in each country remained unaware of parallel efforts elsewhere. In general, innovations remained localized and detached. Malnourished once they moved beyond their initial infusion of energy, enthusiasm, and funds, they eventually succumbed or shed their radical aspirations in order to survive.

These experiences reflect as well a broader pattern. Although there have been important exceptions, schools in Africa have been more concerned with maintaining order than with promoting change.

Throughout Africa schools have been sites of opposition and protest. The schools that trained the low level administrators of colonial rule also educated the leaders of the nationalist anti-colonial movements. In many countries teachers were the stalwarts of nascent political parties. Several became their countries' first presidents.

South Africa is perhaps the clearest manifestation of this process. Bantu Education was explicitly designed as a major structural component of apartheid. Schools were directly charged to provide the education necessary for each racial group's permitted economic and social role and to avoid fostering expectations about social mobility or improved jobs or political equality. Because it was so central to maintaining white rule, education was also central to opposing it. The students in Soweto and elsewhere in the mid 1970s understood that well: to challenge the premises and practices of Bantu Education was to threaten apartheid. During apartheid's final years, both inside the schools and out, education was in the vanguard of the struggle. The activists' agenda was thoroughly radical. What was needed, they argued, was not simply the end of school segregation but a radically different vision of schooling and of education more broadly. The education system had to serve not only those in school but those who were not in school, from pre-school youngsters to teenagers unable to complete their schooling to adults who had never been to school. South Africans should be able to enter, leave, and return to school at several points, with certification widely recognized by educators and employers. Even more, education was to be understood as the focus and product of popular mobilization, serving communities as well as individuals. Learning was to involve not only acquiring and using information but also becoming effective citizens in a democratic society, holding leaders accountable, empowering the disadvantaged, and protecting participatory decision making from anti-democratic challenges on all fronts.

While majority rule in South Africa is still quite young and thus definitive assessment is premature, the trajectory seems quite similar to experiences elsewhere. The education agenda comes to be dominated by desegregation and expanded access. Those are, of course, important objectives and difficult to accomplish. But when other objectives slip from view, education reform comes to mean exposing more young people to the very sorts of classrooms, schools, and learning environments that only a few years earlier were so soundly criticized. Once again, schooling is about reading and counting and composition, and once again the national examinations indicate that is not being done very well. Education to promote equality, social mobility, and political participation is subordinated to the examination driven curriculum. Literacy, other adult programs, and pre-school education all remain secondary priorities.

Liberal education (a general term appropriate for the major national education systems in Africa and much of the world) has a dual charter. Its major task is the reproduction of the economic, political, and social order. For that, schools assume responsibility for developing requisite skills (training). That in turn is generally assumed to require that students be assigned to ability groups (tracking). Schools then become the mechanism by which society selects which young people will proceed far in their education and which will not and certifying the accomplishments of those who succeed. Especially important at this juncture is the internalization of the reasonableness of that certification. For schools to serve their reproductive role, students who fail must attribute their problems to their own lack of skill or application, or to circumstances beyond their control, or perhaps to bad luck. What the schools must avoid is the understanding that tracking, achievement, and certification, and their consequences for subsequent life chances, are planned and controllable outcomes of schools and schooling. (Consider for a moment teachers whose students all receive high marks. The immediate assumption is that the teacher must be

doing something wrong, since the classes of teachers who behave appropriately have both successes and failures.) Schools must legitimize as well as track, select, and certify. Their assessments must be accepted as just and appropriate and internalized. Where there is significant unemployment and underemployment, lengthening the course of study, ostensibly to enable graduates to be better prepared and thus more employable, delays their entry into the work force. When they do not secure the jobs they seek, that emphasis on schooling as job preparation also functions to direct their frustrations at not away from the economic and political system that has not created sufficient jobs and toward the education system that has apparently failed to prepare them adequately.

Reproducing the social order in a capitalist world system, however, also requires critique and innovation. To survive in a fiercely competitive environment, national economies must have some people who reject the old ways of doing things, who insist on looking for better alternatives, who are willing to take the risks to criticize and innovate. Hence, schools have a radical as well as a conservative role. They must enable and encourage at least some students to ask difficult questions, to be impatient with the answers they receive, to trust their own judgment at least as much as their teachers' opinions.

A liberal education system is thus charged with contradictory tasks in reproducing society: preserving and protecting the major features of the social order and at the same time challenging and changing them. Commonly, education systems try to manage that combination by separation—emphasizing the conservative role in most schools for most students and encouraging critique in a few schools, generally for elite students. In practice, that separation is difficult to establish and maintain. Each orientation is corrosive of the other. Critique and innovation have a momentum of their own. Often, schools become sites for rebellion, whether indirect (withdrawal, rejection) or direct (militant organization).

During the nationalist and liberation struggles, education emphasized its critical role. As minority rule was dismantled and the new order emerged, nearly everywhere in Africa education turned back to its conservative charter, more concerned with preserving order than with challenging common understandings and forging new paths.

The Role(s) of Research

Earlier I referred to the Jomtien conference and apparent consensus on education for all. Few would disagree with this noble goal, even though many countries lack the resources to achieve it rapidly. But why? Why is universal mass education the highest priority? And if it is, why focus primarily on basic (primary) education in schools, rather than, say, adult and other education programs outside school settings?

There are many answers to those and related *why* questions, but the answer that seems the most important in the 1990s, especially to those who disburse funds to support education in the Third World, is that *research shows* that investing in primary education yields the best return. That is, support for this focus on primary education rests on the claim that research has persuasively demonstrated that investing in primary education promises the greatest progress toward development (however defined).

It is not the specific conclusion that is most striking here. I have already noted problems with the uncritical reliance of rate of return analysis. As well, the history of public discourse on education suggests that every broadly accepted observation is eventually discarded as partial, misleading, incorrect, or all three. A successor truth will emerge, advocated just as ardently. Rather, what is remarkable here is the implicit consensus on research as the principal determinant of education policy. The Jomtien resolutions are but a single example of the privileged position of research, or more accurately, claims about research and its findings, in debates on education policy. Research may inform and guide policy, or it may rationalize and justify policies

adopted for other reasons, or it may be quite irrelevant to policy. But claims about what research shows constitute the core of the development discussion. Without the claim of research support, policy proposals lose credibility. Similarly, policy critiques that do not cite supporting research are easily ignored. Prospective participants in the policy debate must demonstrate an adequate supply of relevant research simply to have their voices heard.

This formulation—"research shows that . . . "—and its synonyms are ubiquitous. Policy makers have probably always claimed that observation and experience, that is more or less formal research, support their decisions. The prominence and pervasiveness of the claim that *research shows* . . . within the development arena, however, reflects a powerful contemporary phenomenon: the emergence of a financial-intellectual complex, spawned by the development business. It is important to recognize both the unique characteristics and the shorter and longer term consequences of that combination of research and funding. That in turn requires understanding the ways in which the increasing importance of external assistance and the privileged position of research combine to condition and constrain education's substantive content.

The Evolution of the Social Sciences

To understand what people do and why, we need to know something about what they have done. Rarely, however, are social scientists direct observers of all of the events of interest to them. Hence, most often we rely on information that someone else has collected, more or less systematically, usually for some other purpose. The behavioral revolution in the social sciences, with its shrill cries of "falsifiability!" and "reproducibility!" has pushed us toward the sort of information that can be recorded and stored in quantitative form. It has pushed us as well toward increasingly complex, and perhaps sophisticated, techniques for exploring relationships within that information.

The Facade of Precision[45]

Note here the powerful but often little recognized influence of the prevalent computation strategies. To the present, most computing in the social sciences has been digital. High speed combinations of relatively simple bimodal choices—on/off, yes/no, either/or—permit the manipulation of massive volumes of information. Miniaturization and other technological advances have produced extraordinary increases in speed and capacity. Beyond the raw processing capabilities, digital representation of information seems to have important advantages for social scientists. For example, ambiguities in categorization are either explicitly precluded or organized into contingent connections through which individual paths are unambiguous. As well, events or relationships of interest can be more readily distinguished from similar phenomena and random variations. Yet, the analogue world, is at best imperfectly captured in its digital representation. However sophisticated the sampling techniques, some information is lost. Similarly, when social scientists are constrained to construct categories that are mutually exclusive, the disadvantages of excluding inconsistency and ambiguity may outweigh the value of the apparent resulting clarity. The variations in temporal and spatial context that go unrecorded because they are smaller than the units of measure employed may prove to be critical to inference and interpretation.

Of course, even the most advanced techniques can at best provide only partial remedies for inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the original data. Indeed, careful scholars regularly include a caveat at the beginning of their publications, calling readers' attention to gaps and other problems in the data they use. Unfortunately, often even careful scholars proceed to ignore their

45. For a fuller development of this argument and examples, see Joel Samoff, "The Facade of Precision in Education Data and Statistics: A Troubling Example from Tanzania," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 29, 4 (December 1991), 669-689.

own reservations, developing arguments that rely on data characteristics and/or a level of precision not found in the original data.

Many, perhaps most reported national statistics for Africa, for example, have a large margin of error.[46] Enumerating the multiple sources of that large margin of error is beyond the scope of this discussion. But the immediate implication of taking seriously that margin of error, that is, treating national statistics as rough approximations, is clear. Small observed changes may be more apparent than real and must be treated as such. Even changes on the order of 5-10% (or more) may reflect nothing more than random fluctuations, annual variations, and flawed statistics. Consequently, apparent changes of that magnitude are a weak foundation for broad inferences and for public policy. To be useful, analytic categories need to be larger and rougher (for example, rounded to the nearest 10 rather than to the nearest hundredth, or tenth, or even unit). Quantification permits computerization. While that may make them more defensible, it does not automatically produce better results.

A second implication is that both researchers and policy makers must reject statistics whose underlying assumptions require a level of precision, or linearity, or continuity that the data do not reliably support. A profusion of numbers neither makes a particular interpretation more valid nor renders a policy proposal more attractive. Indeed, the numeric shroud may well obscure far more than it reveals.

Notwithstanding the widespread acknowledgement of the uncertainty in the available data, the canons of social science impel those who conduct research, those who support research, and those who rely on research to justify their actions to overstate the precision of their findings and to attach to them an unrealistically high level of confidence.

Economies as Social Science

Accompanying and fueling the inclination to quantify has been the emergence of economics as the modal social science. This increasingly influential and powerful role for economics stands on two legs, one within and the other outside the academy.

In their ideal form, the methods taught in basic economics courses corresponds well to the direction social science has been moving over the past several decades. The focus is on causal relationships, established by drawing on law-like statements about patterned regularities and exploring the connections among precisely defined factors. Whatever is deemed extraneous to the relationship may be ignored. Factors that may affect the relationship being studied are either assumed not to vary ("other things being equal"), or to vary randomly (thereby having no systematic influence), or are directly or indirectly controlled by the researchers. Finally, the restricted set of factors to be examined (the "variables") can be studied. Ideally, those factors can be changed in some orderly way, either by careful choice of locations, times, or observations, or by simulating the variation based on the information available. Expectations about causality (hypotheses) can then be rejected or supported. The longer term goals are to increase the number of law-like statements that are generally accepted as sufficiently well supported to serve as the foundation for research and perhaps policy and to broaden their field of applicability.

For many scholars, this orientation defines the social scientific method. The ultimate standard is the controlled experiment in which all of the factors can be manipulated by the experimenter. Since that is rarely possible for social scientists, the challenge is to approach that ideal as closely as possible.

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46. Both the problems with the reported data and their major causes are well known. The basic data deficiencies are often compounded by careless use of what is available (for example, assuming that budgeted allocations are approximately the same as actual expenditures, or comparing budget data in one year with expenditure data in another).

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The current preeminence of economics also stems from its role as the social science deemed to have the most important practical consequences. Many people, both inside and outside the academy, understand the value of social science primarily in terms of what used to be called social engineering: how to make society function better, how to improve people's lives, or resolve conflict, or reduce environmental degradation. Especially where there are sustained efforts to secure public funding for research and higher education more generally, researchers resort to liberal utilitarian defenses of what they do. Commonly, economics is perceived as the branch of social science that has the most to say, or rather, the most to say that is useful, about the standard of living. Other disciplines fall short.

Research as Currency, or perhaps Ammunition

At the same time, research has become the currency of development planners and decision makers, used to assign value to alternative and often competing projects. Wealthier proposals and programs—those that can claim greater research support—are more likely to be approved and funded.

Surely that is desirable. Research guides decisions. Expertise rather than politics prevails. Researchers have long complained that decision makers pay too little attention to research. Finally they are listening to us, say the academics. But are they? This idealized model of the allocation of development assistance is deceptive in several ways.

First, the common view that competent policy makers base their decisions on a careful review of relevant research is simply inaccurate. In development as in most other policy making arenas, research enters the decision making process through multiple, often indirect pathways. One begins well before any particular decision. The research to which decision makers have been exposed during their education and socialization informs the frameworks within which policies are considered and decisions made. That is, long after their schooling has been completed, decision makers draw on their academic learning (and of course their practical experience) to formulate questions, select the proposals worth pursuing, specify evaluative criteria, and make decisions. That indirect influence may be very subtle and is often not apparent to the decision makers themselves.

Second, policy makers who are largely guided by research focused on the issue to be decided do not necessarily make better decisions. The research that is deemed relevant is generally instrumental and relatively narrowly gauged since it takes the existing patterns of economic, political, and social organization as givens. Yet, effective and appropriate public policy cannot ignore interests, preferences, and politics. Making public policy is not, after all, an antiseptic, sheltered, apolitical process. Successfully implemented policies must confront and engage, not avoid, the conflict of interests and the tensions among the organization of production, the structure of power, and patterns of social differentiation.

Third, research enters the policy process as justification for decisions already made. Especially in the public discourse of a bureaucratic environment, where decision makers are charged to emphasize rationality and deemphasize politics and favoritism, the claim that research supports a particular course of action is the most powerful defense against all challengers. Put crudely, in the policy shoot-out, the gunfighter quickest to draw the research pistol and best supplied with research ammunition is most likely to emerge victorious. Even a slow draw with limited ammunition may insure survival.

Fourth, as I have argued, the conjunction of development assistance and research transforms both research and its role in the policy process, to the detriment of both. That research influences policy indirectly and that research is used to justify decisions are not necessarily problematic. In the contemporary development business, however, where the same agencies are in-

creasingly responsible for decisions, funding, and research, it is timely to explore critically the roles of education research and researchers.

When Research Becomes Consulting

In much of the Third World education research has become inextricably intertwined with the needs, interests, and preferences of external assistance agencies. Currently for example, directly and indirectly those organizations employ more researchers and commission more studies of African education than any African research institution and perhaps more than nearly all of them combined. Informed and well grounded policy is, of course, desirable. So indeed is dialogue between policy makers and researchers. Yet, just as their funds seat foreign aid organizations at the education policy table, so too do those funds secure powerful influence over research and the research process. Little anticipated and not yet well understood, this conjunction of external funding and education research is only beginning to be studied systematically. The major outlines of this relationship have become sufficiently clear, however, to warrant concern among both researchers and policy makers. To put the issue sharply, research and policy are both at risk.

Where public funding for education is inadequate, public funding for education research hardly exists. Just as education and training decision makers and planners look overseas to fund innovation and development, especially as their real incomes have stagnated or declined and as their institutions struggle to maintain even a minimum level of service, so do scholars look abroad for support for their research. They quickly learn that unencumbered research grants are scarce and difficult to obtain. More readily available are contracts with external assistance agencies, that is funding for commissioned research on all or parts of the education sector. With those commissions come specifications of appropriate approaches, methods, and analytic framework. Hence, education research too becomes part of the aid relationship, with senior researchers regularly shuttling between cramped offices and empty libraries on the one hand and on the other the computers, cellular telephones, and substantial fees of client consulting.

The manifestations, consequences, and problems of this conjunction of funding and research are multiple. Since I have addressed them at length elsewhere,[47] let me simply note here several of the most visible and significant of those outcomes: insisting on a detached, clinical perspective that devalues the local role; influencing and constraining the education and development discourse; legitimizing weak propositions; entrenching flawed understandings by according them official status; seeding and fertilizing theoretical and analytic fads; treating education primarily as technique and administration; mystifying knowledge and power relations; and promoting orthodoxy at the expense of critical inquiry. Combined, these outcomes privilege a particular understanding of education and development, thereby diverting attention from and often precluding alternative understandings and perspectives. What ought to be the subjects of policy debate come to be regarded as the normal, unexceptional, and largely unalterable features of the policy environment.

With low basic salaries, individual researchers are highly motivated to become consultants to the external agencies. Unable to pay a living wage or to provide direct research funding, universities are inclined to tolerate, often encourage, that practice. Obliged to justify their programs and allocations and chastised for relying so heavily on expatriate researchers, the funding and technical assistance agencies eagerly recruit local education researchers. Research becomes consulting. That has several problematic consequences.

First, generally the contracting agency selects the topic to be studied and often the methodology to be used. It is of course reasonable for an agency to initiate and commission research to meet its needs. Where that arrangement is the only source of research funding, how-

47. For a recent overview, see "Chaos and Certainty in Development."

ever, the topics studied do not emerge organically from interactions among educators, teachers, learners, and the community. Nor for the most part are the topics specified independently by those who manage the education system, or defined by the debates among researchers and other educators. Similarly, the methodology employed is also generally determined by the contracting agency, commonly a methodology perceived to have international legitimacy and considered credible by those to whom the agency must report. Rarely does the methodology reflect the experiences of the researcher, or methodological debates among researchers within the country, or the nationally developed critiques of dominant methodological orientations.

Second, commissioned research[48] generates reports that are sent to the contracting agency and perhaps the government. Only very rarely are findings subjected to academic and practitioners' peer review. As a result, what are taken as authoritative results and recommendations may be seriously flawed, partial, skewed, or all three.

Third, since the reports of the commissioned research rarely enter the academic literature, they do not contribute to integrating the results of multiple investigations into common understandings, adapting findings to local circumstances, or incorporating them into instructional programs. Rather than the cumulation and sifting and winnowing that are central to the creation of knowledge, commissioned research produces largely disconnected lonely trees, some robust but many quite frail, scattered across the desolate plain of bookless schools and deskless classrooms.

Fourth, research as consulting transforms the academic reward system. Africa again provides the sharpest examples. In a few African universities, promotion remains important and requires publications. In most, however, promotion in university rank is less important and far less remunerative than securing another consulting contract. A month's work can yield a year's pay or more. It is consulting contracts, not university lecturing, that make possible computers, cellular telephones, four-wheel-drive vehicles, and international travel.

Fifth, even as commissioned studies do make it possible for there to be research, their disconnectedness functions to undermine the research institutions. Effectively unable to set their own agenda or to control the principal reward systems for their staff, research institutions are buffeted by the fickle winds of agency priorities and preferences.

Sixth, the current penchant for reducing government functions reinforces the privatization of research. Beyond their individual consulting contracts, in many countries researchers have formed local consulting firms that market their services to foreign funding and technical assistance agencies. In itself, that is not problematic. The existence of multiple and competing research centers may enhance both the quality of research and its utility for policy making. As the privatization of research has developed, however, it leads more toward the multiplication of parasitic organizations entirely dependent on one or several foreign patrons than toward the development of the institutional capacities and the autonomy that enable research centers to establish and sustain solidly grounded high quality research programs. Retaining their university posts and thus their academic legitimacy, researchers reconstitute themselves beyond the university's reach. That is, though they rely on the university's resources and credibility, they contribute little to the longer term development of the university as an institution whose mission includes research. Often employing former senior civil servants, ostensibly independent research consulting firms contribute to the construction of research as a proprietary endeavor, hidden behind walls of confidentiality, secrecy, and ministerial privilege rather than shared widely and exposed to broad review and critique.

The creation of knowledge is always a complex and spasmodic process. The boundaries between the university and other knowledge generating arenas are often productively ambiguous.

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48. I conflate here *commissioned research* (studies initiated and funded by an external agency) and *consulting* (individual and occasionally institutional contracts for services rendered) since that is the common usage among the practitioners.

And it is certainly not unique in human history to insist that knowledge creation be utilitarian or to find knowledge creators dependent on those with disposable funds. Where research as consulting functions to determine how problems are specified and addressed (often with economics and its perspectives and assumptions privileged and elevated to be the mother social science), national dependence is institutionalized well into the future.

Methodological Orthodoxy Stymies Critical Inquiry

That the external assistance agencies have influenced education policy is clear. Less clear but surely equally troubling has been their influence on research. Although there are of course debates and disagreements among those involved in commissioned research, the conjunction of external funding and research fosters a methodological orthodoxy. Quite simply, some theories and methods are deemed acceptable (a determination that is justified by terming them "scientific"), while others are rejected. To be heard, to influence outcomes, and to be employed by the funding and technical assistance agencies requires operating, for example, within the world of human capital theory and rate of return analysis. As local researchers develop their skills within that orthodoxy, their critical edge is dulled. The presumed universalism of the accepted research canons treats efforts to depart from the mainstream in order to tune approach and method to the local setting as simply poor social science.

In this way, the combination of foreign assistance and commissioned research functions to disseminate globally not only particular understandings of education and development but also how those understandings are created, revised, and refined. Effectively, although its origins of course preceded the recent period of economic disarray and foreign assistance, financial crisis and structural adjustment have reinforced and entrenched the globalization of a particular sort of social science.

The Mystification of Knowledge and Power Relations

It is striking that individual scholars may orient their work very differently in the academic and financial-intellectual complex spheres of operation. In the former, the relevant audience is institutional and disciplinary, academic peers and university chairs and deans, while in the latter the officials of the employing agency constitute the audience that matters. They are more likely than the general body of academics to have shared preferences about method, approach, and findings. Much more easily than is possible at most universities and research institutes, funding agencies can readily terminate their relationship with a particular scholar.

In the conjunction of funding and research, scholarship becomes a proprietary process. The investors have the determining voice in the selection of topics, researchers, and methods, limit access to source materials, and often control the dissemination of findings. Consequently, the *process* of knowledge creation is obscured, mystifying the power relations embedded in the research and thereby in the programs it supports. Perhaps not entirely aware of their own role, scholars become advocates not only for particular understandings of development and underdevelopment but also for a particular sort of global order.

Knowledge *is* power in this setting. Education initiatives and reforms, even maintaining the schools, require resources. Securing funds requires research findings. Those who can provide research findings gain influence, often control, over decisions and programs. Those who determine the sorts of research that are acceptable secure even broader influence and control. More troubling, that systemic ability to constrain and set agendas and priorities is barely discernible and thus generally inaccessible since it is embedded in ostensibly apolitical and neutral rules and procedures of research. How are peasants to challenge *the* scientific method? Are their teachers, or their teachers, any more likely to do so? Power relations that might be regarded as profoundly problematic if they were seen clearly are so enmeshed in ordinary everyday practices that they

become invisible. Research intended to clarify education functions to mystify power and authority.

On South African Uniqueness

To be able to explore the implications for South Africa of these characteristics of the global political economy, aid dependence, and international and African education currents, we must enter the debate on what has come to be termed "South African exceptionalism." While it is beyond the scope of this paper on education reform to address fully and critically the major issues of that debate, it is essential to respond to the core claim. Put forcefully, the argument is that since the South African situation is unique, experiences elsewhere in Africa are of little direct relevance to education reform in South Africa.

The historical context for that claim seems clear. South Africa's combination of foreign settlers, coerced immigrants, expanding, competitive, and often contentious indigenous states, and prolonged minority rule is indeed unique. Still, for students of Africa, and of development and the world system, that uniqueness claim is jarring for two major reasons.

First, nearly every country can make a similar claim. Each setting does have its own unique history, characteristics, and trajectory. Tanzania, for example, came to its independence with a widely understood non-European language that has become an effective national language. Unlike most of Africa, Tanzania's president can speak directly to the entire populace, without translators and interpreters, and use the nuances of that language to relate parables and craft metaphors that illuminate policy choices. Guinée's sharp rejection of continued post-colonial association with France and the subsequent French effort to punish Guinée for its stance are unparalleled. The Congo/Zaire is surely unique in the extent to which its post-colonial experience has been dominated by international politics, the U.S. government, and a U.S.-protected kleptocratic clientelism that enriched the elite and shaped events in several neighboring countries. The Sudan too is unique in its particular mix of cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions and their activation by political forces both within and outside the country. Nigeria is unique in the way in which separate histories and peoples were stitched into a single colony and then country and subsequently held together by a combination of regional and ethnic allocations and force. The general point here is straightforward. Every country has its unique circumstances, which must be examined carefully and critically. Recognizing that uniqueness, however, is not grounds for rejecting efforts to explore commonalities.

Second, the uniqueness claim has been used in contemporary South African politics, certainly for a decade or more, to resist exploring the implications for South Africa of events and circumstances elsewhere in Africa at the cost of constraining both analysis and effective political action. For example, in hindsight it seems clear that the transitions to majority rule in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Namibia had important similarities to the comparable transition in South Africa. Yet often the uniqueness claim was used to argue that those experiences were not directly relevant to the transition process in South Africa, with the result that at least in some arenas what should have been foreseeable was neither fully anticipated nor effectively managed. For a second example, consider the creation of a new national education system in Namibia. Like South Africa, Namibia came to majority rule with multiple racially and ethnically defined education departments. Yet in the terminal period of their own minority rule, there were few South African educators and education activists sufficiently conversant with the Namibian experience even to consider how it might inform their own education and political agenda and strategy. Here, too, the general point is straightforward. Effective analysis requires *both* recognizing South Africa's uniqueness *and* exploring commonalities elsewhere.

In this regard, it is important to recall here that for much of South Africa's history the world system has had institutions explicitly charged with imposing, inducing, and reinforcing—

institutionalizing—common practices, orientations, and understandings. In the current era, for education that task has fallen especially to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, though other organizations, including the major charitable foundations, are involved as well. The assertion of South African uniqueness has led to relative inattention to these organizations, a clear manifestation of what is problematic about the uniqueness claim. Commonalities have influenced events in South Africa, perhaps less through their active appropriation by progressive forces than through their more subtle transmission by ostensibly impersonal and disinterested institutions. A more critical examination of that transmission process, itself impeded by the uniqueness claim, is long overdue.

Institutionalizing International Influence

Let us recapitulate. My task has been to explore the context for education reform in Africa and particularly South Africa. Important changes in the global political economy have followed the demise of colonial rule. Socialist disarray and U.S. triumphalism have fueled the rejuvenation of notions of modernization and nearly everywhere undermined the foundations for constructing other-than-capitalist development. At the same time, the international financial institutions have increasingly become providers of both funds and advice, in the process supplanting the United Nations' technical agencies, especially UNESCO.

Note that I have not used the term "globalization" for this process. As Wallerstein notes,

> As used by most persons in the last ten years, 'globalization' refers to some assertedly new, chronologically recent, process in which states are said to be *no longer* primary units of decision-making, but are now, only now, finding themselves located in a structure in which something called the 'world market,' a somewhat mystical and surely reified entity, dictates the rules.[49]

Clearly, the international integration of goods, technology, labor, and capital has a long and energetic history. Throughout that period controllers of capital have been powerful decision-makers, not infrequently determining state behavior. And while new technology does permit the instantaneous transmission from one end of the world to the other and does enable researchers in Africa to consult the same electronic databases as researchers in, say, Sweden, Japan, or the U.S., the movement of labor remains sharply controlled and restricted by nationally-set rules. Colonial rule was, among other things, a general strategy for integrating Africa into the global political economy on terms set largely in Europe. Formally managed by the World Bank and the IMF, structural adjustment plays a similar role. Hence, rather than presume that interactions among distant parts of the world system are a recent phenomenon, I have instead highlighted the particular changes in the current era most relevant to our discussion.

In the post-colonial era, education in Africa has become increasingly aid dependent, facilitating the implantation within Africa of particular perspectives on education, its role, and its organization and management. Africa's education policy statements insist that education must not only promote national development but also reduce inequality and conflict, nurture the creation of an integrated and self reliant political economy, prepare young people for their roles as citizens in democratic society, and enable students to develop the skills that will make them not only employable but the creators of employment. In practice, however, those broad aspirations are largely ignored as education is addressed as a social investment, as a production process, and as a delivery system.

In this era education in Africa is, in the common view, in a severe and continuing crisis. After an initial very rapid expansion, schools, teachers, and instructional materials cannot meet the demand. In some countries enrollments and literacy rates have declined. The general quality of education is low with little prospect of immediate improvement. Though colonial rule has

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49. Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of World-Systems Analysis," *Review* XXI,1(1998):107.

ended, external influences persist and are perhaps strengthened by education's aid dependence. In a thoroughly teacher-centered system, teachers are marginalized. Promising local experiments and innovations flourish briefly, then wither. From the vanguard of the struggle against minority rule, education in independent Africa has again become primarily an instrument of social control. Education research and researchers contribute to these developments, especially by legitimizing approaches, constructs, and terminology that function to stymie critical inquiry, mystify knowledge, and obscure power relations.

In sum, sometimes blatantly and explicitly, more often subtly, international influences have been institutionalized in African education, structuring how we frame and address what we take to be the important issues. For the most part, the framework itself escapes our critical attention. Therein lies its power. Though its history and transition to majority rule are unique, and though its isolation for a period sheltered it from some of these currents, South Africa is no exception.

CHALLENGES

In practice, the broader context and these education currents orient education policy and programs in contemporary Africa toward desegregation (a much longer and more difficult process than has generally been anticipated) and expanded access (for nearly all of Africa, education for all remains a distant goal). The principal operational concerns are costs and efficiency. Schools remain generally teacher-centered, hierarchical, and authoritarian settings where acquiescence and compliance are valued and rewarded over innovation and critique, forbidding and hostile to community involvement. Especially troubling for education reformers is that most students, parents, teachers, and national decision makers think that is normal, indeed desirable.

In this environment, learning, the learning process, and learners receive much less policy attention, often disappearing entirely from view. So, too, do commitments to promoting equality, providing special attention to disadvantaged groups, and preparing future citizens not only to participate in democratic society but to protect it vigorously.

The challenges for those involved in reforming education in South Africa, in particular teacher education, are numerous and daunting. Let us note just a few.

What Exactly is Education for Liberation? or Self Reliance? or Development?

One major challenge is conceptual. What, exactly, is to be accomplished? If education in post-apartheid South Africa is to be focused on something more than desegregation and expanded access (as I have noted, those goals are both very important and very difficult to achieve), how can that be reasonably understood by educators and by the community at large? What are the implications of this conception for the organization of the learning process? for examinations and other assessment tools? for the responsibilities, roles, and preparation of teachers? Equally important, what are the politics necessary to develop and communicate this conception?

Education Quality

A second challenge is to move away from the common understanding of education quality as high scores on the usual achievement measures. Where education is to play a role in developing a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic society, those schools where students have strong matriculation results but where success and attrition rates are sharply differentiated by race and where access to particular specializations and subject combinations is heavily determined by gender cannot be regarded as high quality schools.

How, then, to reconceptualize and reconstruct the notion of quality? How to do so in ways that expand participation in making education decisions on the one hand and that on the

other lead to outcomes that are regarded as reasonable and legitimate by both professional educators and the citizenry at large?

Accountability

A third challenge has to do with accountability. To whom is education—schools, teachers, learners—to be accountable and how?

The terminal years of apartheid were marked by an extraordinary popular mobilization and unprecedented community accountability. Consulting the "structures" was often cumbersome and slow, but it was very different from accepting the decisions of those in authority. As the disenfranchised were once again becoming citizens, citizenship was being redefined to emphasize participation, consultation, and accountability. What are to be the post-apartheid sequels to that process?

The transfer of responsibility for much of education from a national ministry and department to the provinces and local levels is both an opportunity and a risk. Decentralization in its various forms provides opportunities for community participation in major education decisions and in the everyday practices of schools. At the same time, increased local control can also facilitate the entrenchment of discrimination and privilege.

What, then, are the appropriate structures of accountability for South Africa's education system? Equally important, how to construct and sustain them?

Reconstructing the Role of the Teacher

Finally, a challenge that will I trust be central to the discussions that will follow over the next two days will be reconstructing the role of the teacher. Relative inattention to that effort has effectively undermined education reform efforts in several African countries, as teachers became its major opponents, both indirectly (reluctant compliance, disengagement, disaffection) and directly (militant action). In other countries, teacher education and re-education programs were initiated but not sustained. Often, under the pressure to expand schools rapidly the teacher education curriculum de-emphasized critical pedagogy and radical reexamination of teachers' roles in favor of developing subject competence and student control skills.

There are some very promising initiatives. Reconstructing teacher education has been the major strategy for education reform in Namibia. I look forward to hearing more about that, both progress and problems.

What, then, for South Africa? In the midst of retrenchment, reassignment, and objectives based education, what are the policies, practices, and perhaps most important, politics of teacher education reform?

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